

**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please add the following at page 1, before the Background of the Invention section of the above-referenced application:

**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This patent application is a continuation application of U.S. Application Serial No. 09/964,803, filed on September 28, 2001, and may benefit from the priority thereof.

Please amend the specification as follows.

[0023] Turning now to FIG. 2, the preferred approach to optimizing objective parameter values 44 is shown in greater detail at block 34. Specifically, it can be seen that a set of sensitivity factors 40 is developed at block 38 based on the objective parameters 24 and noise margins 42 in accordance with the noise constraints 30. The sensitivity factors 40 therefore characterize a noise sensitivity of the circuit. It should be noted that timing constraints 32 and physical constraints 33 (FIG. 1) are also used in the sensitivity factor development process. Objective parameter values 44 and modified noise margins 42 are selected at block 46 based on the sensitivity factors 40 such that the objective parameter values 44 minimize power costs to the circuit. Processing block 48 provides for repeating the developing and selecting until changes in the objective parameter values 44 fall below a predetermined threshold. The sensitivity factors 40 therefore provide a unique approach to circuit optimization that enables the use of noise constraints 30 to iteratively apply noise margins 42 to the nodes of the circuit.